

Having the opportunity to meet with the Mr. Bilkey Saturday evening—he asked to see me, and I was happy to do that—I learned a great deal about the knowledge and level they have of how to put a greater security situation in the transit of these containers. Let us give them an opportunity.

I thank my friend for his remarks.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, and I certainly agree. I have talked to a good number of people in the business community and in the ports community of New York. The issue is a complicated one but one that is hardly clear-cut. But I will continue to pursue that.

I also will make just one other point; that is, the worry many of us have is not that the head of this company would be wanting to facilitate terrorism but, rather, that terrorists might too easily infiltrate such an organization. I will get to that in a little bit of time.

(The remarks of Mr. SCHUMER pertaining to the introduction of S. 2333 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as a Senator from Tennessee, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### APPOINTING PENSION CONFEREES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, right before the recess, the distinguished majority leader and I had an exchange regarding the pension reform conference. Everyone acknowledges the conference is necessary. The pension reform bill is headed to conference. It is a very important piece of legislation that will affect the pensions of millions of working Americans. It has strong bipartisan support. It passed this Senate by a vote of 97 to 2.

This has boiled down to something that is fairly simple: Who will be the conferees? We have a right, of course, on our side to choose who we believe should be in the conference. The distinguished majority leader has the right to choose whom he wants to be in the conference. Arbitrarily, the majority leader said that conference would have seven Republicans and five Democrats. That is not acceptable. We have said that because of the complexity of this issue we need another Democrat. We are willing to maintain the margin of two where Republicans would have an advantage. But we believe it should be eight to six. Republicans would get another conferee. Democrats would get another conferee.

Now, certainly, we are eager to work on producing a conference report that

will protect the benefits working Americans have earned, provide certainty to employers who sponsor pensions, and strengthen the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. I can see nothing harmful about having six Democrats instead of five. It is important to get the right people into the room when these issues are being discussed and decisions are being made. Remember, this conference will have jurisdictional aspects relating to the Finance and the HELP Committees.

When we had the corporate tax bill last year, there were 23 conferees—23 conferees. We are saying there should be, again, eight Republicans and six Democrats. Conferees on this legislation will need to resolve a number of important and very technical issues because we have different feelings than does the House. And when I say "we," I mean Democrats and Republicans, as indicated by the overwhelming vote to get it out of here.

I have confidence in the abilities of the two lead Senators on our side, Senators KENNEDY and BAUCUS. But this is one conference where the addition of a couple more sets of eyes is likely to lead to better legislation. So I would hope the majority leader would focus his attention on this issue and let the conference go forward. The only thing holding this up is whether this conference will have six Democrats or five in arriving at a bill that will be brought back to this body.

#### REMEMBERING THE ADMINISTRATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise to talk a little bit about this administration, the administration of George W. Bush. Unless there is a significant turnaround, this administration will not be remembered for its accomplishments. It, in fact, will be remembered for its incompetence. And this dangerous incompetence has made America less secure.

From Social Security to border security, the American people know that incompetence lies at the heart of this administration's failures. Ultimately, this incompetence has come with a price. It has made our country less safe and less secure.

We can talk about a lot of things, but this afternoon I will talk about a few. Let's talk about the prescription drug program. I support a Medicare drug benefit, but this administration has botched the program so badly that relatively no one has signed up for it. The President, in his Saturday address, said 25 million Americans have signed up for this program.

That is simply not true. Twenty of those twenty-five million, prior to this legislation passing, already had prescription drug benefits. And now, under this program, they have a lot less than they had before. So after all this talk, there are a few million new people who have signed up, and tens of millions of people are still left trying to figure out what to do and how to do it.

Of the seniors currently in the program, millions are paying more for their drugs than they were under the previous coverage. This includes thousands of seniors in Nevada who face more restrictions and higher costs. Millions more seniors were wrongly dropped from the system, leaving them without coverage for the life-saving drugs.

I had the opportunity, this morning, to meet with the Governors. They are terribly concerned because of this legislation being so poorly managed and, frankly, poorly written. The States have had to advance their hard-earned moneys to pay for the drug coverage of people who simply are cut off. They want to know when they are going to be reimbursed.

What about the President's incompetence in the war on terror?

In 2002, Osama bin Laden was trapped in the mountains of Afghanistan.

But instead of redoubling our resources to capture him, the President shifted to Saddam Hussein, and bin Laden was left to fight another day. As a result, the al-Qaida leader continues to plot and threaten us as we speak.

Meanwhile, terrorist attacks across the globe are up sharply over the last 5 years, and al-Qaida has morphed into a global terror franchise.

Government reform. What has the President done? President Bush promised to create a new tone in Washington. He has, but it hasn't been a pleasant tone. His incompetence has created the biggest culture of corruption our Nation has ever seen, with scandals in the House, the Senate, and the White House, and the country is paying a price for this corruption: higher gas prices, higher health care costs, and deficits year after year. Every Bush budget has broken a record of paying a higher deficit than the year before. But the problem is that he keeps breaking his own record.

It is difficult for me to comprehend how my friends on the other side of the aisle can allow this to go on. We were told by Alan Greenspan, when we were in the majority, that the deficit was the most important thing facing this country. So we did something about it—the Budget Deficit Reduction Act of 1993—and not a single Republican voted for it in the House or the Senate. Vice President Gore had to break the tie in the Senate. In the last 3 years of the Clinton administration, less money was being spent than we were taking in. We retired the debt by about a half trillion dollars. That certainly has not been the case during the Bush years.

Whether we like it or not, President George W. Bush will be President for the next 2½ years. We need him to govern competently. We cannot afford more of what we have seen since 2001. So today I offer three issues: The port security issue, Iraq, and Katrina—these are only three—where President Bush can work with us in order to turn his record into a record of progress and competence.